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If you would like to receive the bulletin via email,
just email Jennel Binsky at
jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov

FROM TOM'S DESK

This edition of the Bulletin is a few days late going to press because many of our contributing writers have been attending summer conferences. Since we want you to have the most up-to-date and accurate information possible, we elected to delay publishing until everyone had an opportunity to submit their articles.

I know you join me in wishing Lynda Muir, the Administrative Assistant in our Pocatello office, all the best in her retirement. I attended her retirement celebration in Pocatello on June 30th, and she is excited about having more time to spend with her daughters and grandbabies. Thanks, Lynda, for all your years of devoted service to Idaho's veterans. With Lynda's departure we welcome Arlene Davis to our OVA family. Arlene comes to us from the staff at Idaho State University, and I know she will be a tremendous asset to our team. If you live in the Pocatello area, please take time to go by and meet Arlene.

We are excited about this year's Service Officer's Training Conference scheduled for August 12-14, 2008, at the Double Tree Riverside Hotel in Boise. If you are a Service Officer and have not contacted Jennel Binsky at our Boise office to let her know you are coming, please call as soon as possible. If you are not a service officer, please contact your post and county Service Officers and encourage them to attend. The more knowledgeable we are as Service Officers, the better we can assist Idaho's veterans and their families.

Enjoy this edition of the Bulletin and please share it with your fellow veterans. I encourage you to read Jennel's instructions on how to receive this publication via email rather than in hard copy. Your electing to receive it via email will greatly reduce our costs and the impact to our environment. Thank you and enjoy the summer.

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOME – LEWISTON VOLUNTEER SERVICES, Terri Brockman

The residents have been busy this quarter and are looking forward to summer. They participated in a six week course of harmonica lessons and a lung study. The study was brought to them by students from Lewis Clark State College. The residents had a great time and have been practicing routinely to keep up their skills.

May kicked off with National Nursing Home Week. The residents invited other residents from area nursing homes to come and play bingo in our new Activities Room and it was a great time. On May 26th, the home held a Memorial Day Flag Ceremony put on by the Marine Corp League. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with this event. On May 30th, a Traditional Memorial Day Ceremony was held. The event was well attended by our community, veterans, and service organizations and their members. The colors were presented by the Retirees of the 148th Field Artillery Battalion; our Chaplain gave an invocation; former State Legislature, Mike Mitchell, welcomed the attendees; Larry Craig was our Guest speaker; Pipes and Drums from the Lewiston Firefighters preformed; a Memorial Wreath was placed on the "I am an American Memorial;" Taps was played by Gary Gemberling; we closed with a benediction by our Chaplain, and refreshments were served following the ceremony.

June found the weather changing and our residents out enjoying it. On June 14th, the Home held its Volunteer Appreciation Day and Grand Opening of the new Activity Room. These events featured a day packed full of music and refreshments for residents and volunteers. National Veterans Home week was celebrated with a trip to Tunnel Pond in Orofino for a day of fishing sponsored by the employees of the fish hatchery. The weather and the pond were beautiful. A BBQ sponsored by District 2 VFW and Auxiliary was held on June 28th, where all the residents, their family members, and staff enjoyed a great meal.

Many volunteer opportunities are available here at our Home. We need volunteer help in the canteen, visiting with residents, playing bingo, and playing cards. Anyone who enjoys singing, playing instruments, and entertaining our troops are encouraged to schedule a place on our activity calendar. If you would like to join the group of caring individuals who volunteer at the Home, please contact me at 799-3422, or stop by the Idaho State Veterans Home in Lewiston located at 821 21st Avenue.

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOMES

Local service officers, family or friends who may know of interested eligible veterans are asked to encourage them to make application for admittance to the home in their geographic area. Call or write to the following for more information and/or applications.

- ✱ **Idaho State Veterans Home - Boise**
Cody Schaner
320 Collins Road
Boise, ID 83702
(208) 246-8736
- ✱ **Idaho State Veterans Home - Lewiston**
Sara Alway
821 - 21st Avenue
Lewiston, ID 83501
(208) 799-3422
- ✱ **Idaho State Veterans Home - Pocatello**
Darcel Cook
1957 Alvin Ricken Drive
Pocatello ID 83201
(208) 236-6340

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOME – BOISE

VOLUNTEER SERVICES, Phil Hawkins

As we move into the summer months, I'd like to thank all the service organizations and other volunteer groups for helping us take care of our nation's heroes. Thanks to the Fat Fenders Car Club for yet another successful Armed Forces Day fundraiser, where once again the parking lot was full of great cars the veterans enjoyed. We also appreciate the Marine Corps League for cooking the hot dogs and hamburgers, the American Legion Posts for hosting the raffle area, and to Body Building Dot Com for once again donating the "Fund Run" t-shirts. All their efforts really made it a special day. I also want to thank the Treasure Valley Young Marines for putting up the flags and for all the other duties they performed during the day. It really makes the car folks happy and proud when they drive their cars through the Avenue of Flags, so thank you very much Young Marines!

A number of veterans had the opportunity to attend this year's Memorial Day program held at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery. It was another outstanding program, which made this Memorial Day special for our veterans. The Motorcycle Rally normally held in June was postponed until August, so look for information on that great event to come out soon. Our annual Flag Day program was held in our Home's dining room on June 14th, and was presented by Boise Elks Lodge #310 with assistance from the Young Marines. As each flag is presented by the Young Marines, a member of the Elks tells the story of that flag. It was a very moving program, which reminds us how important our Flag is. Thanks to the Elks and the Young Marines.

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) convention was held in Burley this year, and I was proud to attend. DAV and DAV Auxiliary members provide a great deal of support to this Home, so I was pleased to be able to thank them at their convention. They truly make the lives of our veterans better by the sacrifices they make. I was also invited to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) convention in Worley, where a lot of good information was passed out and I was honored to be able to thank both the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary for all the support and kindness they show our veterans. I was unable to attend the Military Order of the Purple Heart and Marine Corps League conventions this year, but certainly appreciate them for all the support they provide our Home. I also want to make sure the Fleet Reserve and the Ladies Auxiliary know how much their continued support of this great Home is appreciated.

We are looking forward to the 4th of July Parade in Boise. Our bus will be in the parade and the American Legion Auxiliary will provide root beer floats for everyone when we return to the Home. I am also looking forward to attending the American Legion Convention in Lewiston in July.

For those of you who visit the Home in the coming months, the Physical Therapy Department has moved into the space formerly occupied by Division headquarters. They are temporarily occupying space at the Washington Group International building not far away.

I would be remiss if I didn't extend a special thanks to Stan Meholchick for the fantastic fishing trip in May. Stan made a special trip to the Clear Creek Hatchery where he secured trout in excess of four pounds to be caught by our residents. This trip was shared with folks from the VA and the VA Outpatient group as well. On June 18th we had our annual Twin Falls Fishing Day, where great fishing and great hospitality was provided by American Legion Post 7. I can't say enough about this wonderful annual event and how much our residents look forward to it.

Don't forget about the Veterans Olympics on Saturday, September 29th this year. If you can volunteer, please be at the registration booth on the VA grounds between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. that morning. It's a great event and if you've never participated, you will truly enjoy the day.

I would like to thank all of you who continue to volunteer at this great Home, and I invite any of you who have not been by for a visit to come. You can meet the veterans and the great staff who provide care for our veterans. They truly are very special people who show our residents love and compassion on a daily basis. Cindy Tatro has been named our new Activity Coordinator, replacing Tiffany Bachman who left us to work on the family ranch in Bruneau. On behalf of our Administrator, James Roberts, and all of us in Activities and Volunteer Services, thank you and have a great summer!

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOME – POCATELLO

VOLUNTEER SERVICES, Carey Hebdon

Question: What do you do with more than 200 trout? Answer: Have Friday fish barbecues at the Home here in Pocatello throughout the summer! Appreciation and thanks go out to American Legion Post 23 and to the Jack Ugaki Family for a fabulous fishing trip. Their graciousness included a steak lunch with all the trimmings, and all the fish our residents could catch. There was more than one 6 pounder in the catch that day! Jack's friend, the manager of the Idaho Falls branch of Zion's Bank, donated two prizes for the day. One lucky veteran received a gift of \$350 and another of \$150. Who says Friday the 13th isn't a lucky day?

On June 18th, the incredible volunteers of American Legion Post 7 and the Auxiliary hosted Anglers Day. Upon arrival, a delicious barbecue lunch was waiting for our residents, then they fished for hours to their heart's content, and finished up with a trout dinner served at the Post home. Thanks go out to the National Guardsmen who were on hand to help the residents fish and also provided a tent huge tent for shade. Thanks also go out to the generous owners of the hatchery who traveled from Boise to meet and visit with our residents.

We appreciate the folks who participated in the Home's annual Memorial Day program on May 26th. Thanks to the volunteers, veterans, and veteran's families who remember to honor veterans on this day, but also on every other day of the year. The opportunities to attend outings like the Dodge National Finals Rodeo, going out to lunch, or going to dinner and a movie, as well all our in-house socials and special events, would not be possible without the people we are privileged to call partners as we carry out our mission of "Caring for America's heroes."

Our annual Veterans Olympics are scheduled for September 13th, with opening ceremonies at 10:00 a.m. If you can volunteer to help out, please call me at 236-6340. Veterans Olympics t-shirts are available through the Canteen for a donation of \$10.

Looking even further ahead, Colonel Guy M. Hollingsworth of the Idaho Army National Guard will be our guest speaker for the Home's annual Veterans Day Program. Please plan to join us on Tuesday, November 11th at 2:30 p.m. as we honor all United States Veterans and our Armed Forces.

IDAHO STATE VETERANS CEMETERY UPDATE

CEMETERY DIRECTOR, Zach Rodriguez

In April we placed of one of our Metal of Honor recipient's spouses. It was quite an honor to place the spouse of such a hero.

This last quarter was one for the record books. In May we set a new record for the number of interments; placing a combination of veterans and spouses, honoring a total of 54 in a single month. June was also a busy month, as we placed 51 veterans and spouses.

We also held our Annual Memorial Day Event in May, sponsored by VFW Post 63. The Honorable Daniel Eismann, Chief Justice of the Idaho Supreme Court, was the keynote speaker. He shared many interesting stories which were enjoyed by the large crowd that attended the event this year. It was a huge success with everything from a dove release, to the A-10 Missing Man Flyover. We look forward to making each year a celebration to remember. I thank all the sponsors and volunteers who assisted in making this event the greatest it has ever been.

With the warmer weather, the grounds crew has been busy keeping the cemetery grounds at their best. We will fly the Avenue of Flags for the 4th of July again this year and encourage everyone to take a drive through the cemetery to enjoy the display. As always, if you have never visited the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery, or have not visited for a while, take the time to come tour the grounds. It is beautiful here.

YOU CAN NOW GET THE BULLETIN VIA EMAIL

In our continual effort to reduce costs and lessen our "ecological footprint," the Office of Veterans Advocacy is asking for your help. In order to reduce printing and mailing costs, as well as the amount of paper used, we are asking you to volunteer to receive the bulletin via email.

The bulletin will arrive in your in-box every quarter as a Word document, which will allow to you forward or print and disseminate as many copies as you like. In addition to receiving the quarterly bulletin, you will also receive our annual Veterans Resource Directory via email.

If you can help us with our goal of reducing costs and the saving paper, please email Jennel Binsky at jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov. Thanks for your help with this most worthwhile endeavor! And don't forget you can always view and print the Bulletin and Resource Directory by visiting our website at www.veterans.idaho.gov.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS LICENSE PLATE NOW AVAILABLE

The "Support Our Troops" Idaho license plates are now available. All proceeds from the purchase of these plates will go to the Idaho Guard Reserve Family Support Fund.

In addition to vehicle registration fees, this customized plate will cost \$60 for the first year with a \$40 renewal fee each year thereafter. To order your Support Our Troops license plate, go to the Idaho Transportation Department Division of Motor Vehicles website at www.itd.idaho.gov/dmv.

PRESIDENT SIGNS NEW GI BILL INTO LAW

On June 30th, President Bush signed into law H.R. 2642, The Emergency War Supplemental, which includes the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. The new GI Bill (Chapter 33) or so-called "GI Bill for the 21st Century," boasts the most comprehensive education benefits package since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.

The new bill goes well beyond helping to pay for tuition. Many veterans who served after September 11, 2001, will get full tuition and fees, a new monthly housing stipend, and a \$1,000 a year stipend for books and supplies. The new bill also gives Reserve and Guard members who have been activated for more than 90 days since 9/11 access to the same GI Bill benefits.

The new GI Bill is set to go into affect on August 1, 2009. However, as with any new legislation, it could take some time for the VA to begin paying benefits. Benefits will not be paid for any training or education programs completed before July 31, 2009. If you have served a total of at least 90 days on active duty in the Armed Forces you're eligible. However, the amount of benefits you receive under this program are determined by the actual amount of accumulated post 9/11 service you have. To be eligible for the full benefit, you must have three years of active duty service after 9/11 or have been discharged due to a service-connected disability. For more information on the new GI Bill, go to www.military.com/education-home and follow the links.

THE VA REACHING OUT TO VETS WITH MORTGAGE PROBLEMS

News Release, June 12, 2008

Many home owners have found it difficult recently to pay their mortgages, but quick intervention by loan counselors at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has actually reduced the number of veterans defaulting on their home loans. "VA is reaching out to veterans -- both those who use our home-loan guaranty program and those who don't take advantage of our guaranties -- to keep people in their homes," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "I'm proud of our solid record of success in helping veterans and active-duty personnel deal with financial crises."

Accounting for much of this success are VA counselors at nine regional loan centers who assist people with VA-guarantied loans avoid foreclosure through counseling and special financing arrangements. The counselors can also assist other veterans with financial problems. VA counselors have helped about 74,000 veterans, active-duty members, and survivors keep their homes since 2000, a savings to the government of nearly \$1.5 billion. Depending on a veteran's circumstances, the VA can intercede with the borrower on the veteran's behalf to pursue options -- such as repayment plans, forbearance, and loan modifications -- that would allow a veteran to keep a home. To obtain help from a VA financial counselor, veterans can call the VA toll-free at (877) 827-3702. Information about the VA's home loan guaranty program can be obtained at www.homeloans.va.gov.

Since 1944, when home-loan guaranties were offered with the original GI Bill, the VA has guarantied more than 18 million home loans worth \$911 billion. Last year, about 135,000 veterans, active-duty service members, and survivors received loans valued at nearly \$24 billion. About 2.3 million home loans still in effect were purchased through the VA's home-loan guaranty program, which makes home loans more affordable for veterans, active-duty members, and some surviving spouses by protecting lenders from loss if the borrower fails to repay the loan. More than 90% of VA-backed home loans were given without a downpayment. April data shows that foreclosures are down more than 50% from the same months in 2003. The VA attributes this to prudent credit underwriting standards, its robust supplemental loan servicing program, and VA financial loan counselors.

THE VA NOTIFIES VETERANS PRESCRIBED CHANTRIX®

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable diseases and premature deaths in the United States. The VA is working hard to help veterans who smoke to quit. Since it was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in May 2006, varenicline (marketed as Chantix®) is one of the drugs the VA has offered veterans to help them quit smoking. Like many other medications, varenicline has side effects, some of which may concern veterans enrolled in VA smoking cessation programs. On June 20th, the VA sent letters to all patients for whom the they have prescribed varenicline. The letter encourages patients to contact their VA health care providers if they have questions on their use of varenicline. All VA clinicians, therefore, are asked to review the criteria for prescribing varenicline, and carefully screen patients for criteria that might exclude them from taking the drug, such as a history of suicidal, homicidal, or assaultive behavior, and, if they have post-traumatic stress disorder, whether they are currently unstable; and to talk with them about possible side effects they may be having. The most common of these side effects include having difficulties while driving or feeling drowsy -- but they can also include changes in mood or behavior, and even suicidal thoughts. If VA patients taking varenicline complain of side effects, VA clinicians will consider alternative therapies to help them stop smoking. The clinicians managing VA smoking cessation programs can provide alternatives to consider.

FIRST TRI STATE WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE HELD

April 18th and 19th marked the first-ever Tri-State Women Veterans Conference, where over 350 women veterans from Oregon, Idaho, and Washington converged in Pendleton, Oregon to participate in the event. The keynote speaker was Bob Welch, author of *American Nightingale*. Mr. Welch's book chronicles the life and death of Francis Slager, an Army nurse who landed at Normandy in June 1944 and was later killed by German troops. In addition, there were rotating workshops held providing information on VA benefits, employment, job search, financial planning, and women's health/sexual trauma.

Lunches and a banquet dinner were provided to those in attendance free of charge. Idaho was able to sponsor one of those lunches with the help of the Idaho Veterans Assistance League and service organizations statewide. Thanks go out to the VFW Department of Idaho and VFW Post 63 for their contributions to help sponsor the lunch. We couldn't have done it without you! The Idaho Division of Veterans Services is looking to hold our very own State Women Veteran's Conference in Boise in 2009. This would be the first conference of its kind to be held in Idaho. We will soon be contacting the service organizations and auxiliary units with regards to sponsorship and support of this event. I can't tell you how important it was for these women veterans to be among their peers and be able to share their stories! By working together I think we'll be able to provide an outstanding conference in Boise in 2009.

RED CROSS NAME BEING USED IN SCAM

Information Advisory, June 16, 2008

Idaho National Guard, Idaho Joint Operations Center

A caller contacts a spouse or other family member of a military staff person and identifies himself/herself as a representative of the American Red Cross. The caller states the military staff person has been injured while on duty in Iraq and is being or will be air-lifted to Germany for treatment and care. The caller may ask for additional information about the military staff person, such as date of birth or social security number. In a subsequent call, the caller updates the family member and asks for a donation to the Red Cross to help cover the cost of the air-lift and medical care.

This is a scam using the Red Cross brand. American Red Cross representatives typically do not contact military members or military dependents when a service member has been injured or killed in action. Rather the service member's Command or the casualty assistance branch of the respective Service contacts the primary next-of-kin when a service member has been injured or killed in action.

Military families are urged not to give out any personal information or money over the phone if contacted by unknown/unverified individuals, including confirmation that a family member is deployed. Should any military family member receive such a call, they are urged to report it to their local Family Readiness Group or Military Personnel Unit.

The American Red Cross ensures the American people are in touch with their family members serving in the United States military by operating a communications network that is open 24/7. Through a network of employees and volunteers that link families during emergencies, the Red Cross provides communications for families left behind, assistance to veterans, and preparedness courses for military personnel and their families. For more information or if you would like to make a donation to the Red Cross, only use the authorized Red Cross Website, www.redcross.org. This Advisory is indefinite.

THE VA BEGINS THE NEXT PHASE OF COMBAT VET OUTREACH

News Release, May 30, 2008

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it completed making calls to veterans potentially identified as being ill or injured from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF-OIF), and immediately began targeting over 500,000 OEF-OIF veterans who have been discharged from active duty, but have not contacted the VA for health care.

"We promised to reach out to every OEF and OIF veteran to let them know we are here for them—and we are making real progress in doing so," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. A contractor-operated "Combat Veteran Call Center" is making the initial calls on behalf of the VA. All potentially sick or injured veterans on the VA's list received an offer to appoint a care manager to work with them if they do not have one already. The VA care managers ensure veterans receive appropriate care and know about their VA benefits.

In the new phase, which began on May 30th, veterans who have not accessed health care from the VA will be called and informed of the benefits and services available to them. Additionally, military personnel received information about VA benefits when they left active duty, and the Department sent every veteran a letter with this information after their discharge.

For five years after their discharge from the military, these combat veterans have special access to VA health care, including screening for signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. VA personnel have been deployed to the military's major medical centers to assist wounded service members and their families during the transition to civilian lives. "VA is focused on getting these veterans the help they need and deserve," said Secretary Peake. "I expect these calls to make a real difference in many veterans' lives."

HOW LONG DOES THE VA TAKE?

As of July 1, 2008, the VA Regional Office in Boise reports the following figures. The average time to process disability claims is:

	Boise	Nation
Original claims (7 issues or less):	140 days	206 days
Original claims (8 issues or more):	155 days	188 days
Reopened and claims for increase:	120 days	198 days
Service connected death claims:	98 days	124 days

The Boise VA Regional Office had 280 Global War on Terror (GWOT) claims pending. On average, these claims had been pending 85 days, compared to a national average of 104 days. They have identified 23 severely injured GWOT veterans in Idaho. Claims from five of them are still active and have been pending an average of 32 days. Boise has 1,552 disability claims pending. Of those, 108 (7%) have been pending more than six months, and five (0.3%) have been pending more than one year.

The average time on hold for calls coming in to the Boise VA Regional Office in May was less than three minutes, with 1,843 calls taken. The worst time to call? The first three days of the month and any Monday. They also conducted 344 personal interviews with an average wait time of less than four minutes. The worst time to visit? The first three days of the month and any Monday.

In May, it took 14 days from receipt of an application for rehabilitation, to the date the VA notified the veteran of the decision on eligibility.

In May, the VA issued benefits amounting to \$14,195,917 to Idaho's veterans, and \$1,773,011 to widows, orphans, and dependent parents of Idaho's veterans. That totals over \$191 million per year to support Idaho's disabled veterans, their dependents, and their survivors.

HEALTH CARE "REPORT CARD" GIVES THE VA HIGH MARKS

News Release, June 13, 2008

A new "hospital report card" by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) gives the Department's health care system high marks, with VA facilities often outscoring private-sector health plans in standards commonly accepted by the health care industry. "This report is a comprehensive snapshot of the quality of care VA provides to our veterans," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "From waiting times and staffing levels to hospital accreditation and patient satisfaction, this report demonstrates VA is providing high quality care to the veterans we serve."

Among the report's finding:

- 98% of veterans were seen within 30 days at primary care facilities, 97% at specialty clinics. (Veterans requiring emergency care are seen immediately.)
- All of the VA's 153 medical centers are accredited by the independent Joint Commission which accredits all U.S. health care facilities.
- The quality scores for older veterans are similar to those for younger veterans.

Although screening for breast and cervical cancer for women in VA facilities exceeds screening in private-sector facilities, women veterans lag behind their male counterparts in some quality measurements, the report noted. The VA has already launched an aggressive program to ensure women veterans receive the highest quality of care, including placement of women advocates in every outpatient clinic and medical center. Health care was a major topic at the VA's National Summit on Women Veterans Issues held June 20-22 in Washington, DC.

The report also found minority veterans are generally less satisfied with inpatient and outpatient care than white veterans. That disparity will be the focus of an in-depth study, based upon input from veterans, which will be completed this summer. "Disparities in treatment and satisfaction based on gender or ethnic background are unacceptable," Peake said. "VA has a robust program to look at disparities and to deal with the underlying causes."

In February, Congress directed the VA to complete the report card, highlighting measurements of quality, safety, timeliness, efficiency and "patient-centeredness." "This report demonstrates VA's determination to be open and accountable for the quality and safety of the care we provide," Peake said. "No other health care organization provides this much information about its ability to care for its patients."

The report card is available to view at www.va.gov/health/docs/Hospital_Quality_Report.pdf.

RETIREES, DISABLED VETS CAN STILL FILE FOR 2008 STIMULUS PAYMENTS

News Release, April 23, 2008

Even though April 15th has passed, the Internal Revenue Service reminded retirees, disabled veterans, and others who normally do not file a tax return that there is still time to submit a 2007 form to receive an economic stimulus payment. People who have no tax filing requirement, but have at least \$3,000 in qualifying income, should file a simple Form 1040A. Qualifying income includes any combination of earned income, nontaxable combat pay, as well as certain payments from Social Security, Veterans Affairs, and Railroad Retirement.

“Don’t worry if you did not file a return by April 15. If you meet the criteria, you are still eligible for a stimulus payment. The quicker you file, the quicker you’ll get your payment,” said Doug Shulman, IRS Commissioner. People must file a return by October 15th to receive an economic stimulus payment this year. Shulman urged friends and family members to reach out to acquaintances or relatives who may either be unaware of the Economic Stimulus Payment or unable to file the tax return themselves. “We need everyone’s help to make sure all eligible people get the economic stimulus payments,” he added.

For taxpayers who are required to file an income tax return, the IRS will use the 2007 tax return to determine eligibility for economic stimulus payments of up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples). There also is a payment of \$300 for each qualifying child younger than 17. Those not required to file a return because their income is too low or nontaxable, must file a tax return to obtain their economic stimulus payment. The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 provides a minimum payment of \$300 (\$600 for married couples), plus the \$300 payment per eligible child, if the person (or married couple) has at least \$3,000 in qualifying income. The types of Social Security benefits that are considered qualifying income include retirement, disability, and survivor payments. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is not qualifying income. The types of Veterans Affairs benefits that are considered qualifying income include disability compensation, disability pension, and survivor payments. Qualifying Railroad Retirement payments include the social security equivalent portion of Tier 1 benefits.

People not otherwise required to file an income tax return must file a simple Form 1040A with basic information to ensure that they receive the economic stimulus payment. This information includes their name; address; dependents, if any; amount of their qualifying income (which must be \$3,000 or more); direct deposit information and their signatures. Forms 1040A and instructions are available at www.irs.gov. Eligible people, including their qualifying children, must have Social Security numbers. Also, people cannot be claimed or be eligible to be claimed as a dependent on another’s tax return. People with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers are not eligible.

There are IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers open during the week to provide assistance. To find an IRS office near you, go to IRS.gov and click on “Contact IRS,” then “Contact Your Local IRS Office.” These sites offer free tax preparation and filing for individuals and families whose income is \$40,000 or less. A select number of volunteer tax assistance sites in local communities may also remain open. People can call 1-800-906-9887 to find the volunteer tax assistance site closest to them.

If people want to file their own return electronically, they can still use Free File – Economic Stimulus Payment, also available at www.irs.gov. This program provides free software and free electronic filing of Form 1040A, and it remains open after April 15th.

REPORT ON VA PERFORMANCE HONORED FOR NINTH YEAR IN A ROW

News Release, May 15, 2008

Continuing its commitment to give veterans clear, valuable information on how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is performing, for the ninth year in a row, the VA has been rated by an independent research center as having one of the best annual performance reports in the federal sector. “Veterans have the right to know whether this Department is meeting its obligations to them,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “This prestigious, independent group has found -- once again -- that VA is among the best of the best in the federal sector for providing meaningful information to the American public about our operations and performance.”

Since 2000, the Mercatus Center at George Mason University has examined the performance and accountability reports issued annually by federal agencies. This year, the VA’s report was third among 24 federal departments and agencies. The VA also tied for having the highest score in both transparency and leadership, an example of the Department’s commitment to provide information that is useful and easy to understand and that clearly describes the VA’s contribution to America.

Called *Ninth Annual Performance Report Scorecard: Which Federal Agencies Best Inform the Public?*, the new Mercatus study found the VA’s report is “a user-friendly and informative document.” “The Department [of Veterans Affairs] continues to be an innovator in performance accountability and reporting,” the study’s authors said in a press statement. “These findings show that VA has developed a management culture that sets high standards, measurable goals, and encourages accountability to the American public,” Peake said.

The VA published its latest performance and accountability report in November 2007. It documents the Department’s progress toward ensuring America’s veterans and their families receive timely, compassionate, high-quality care and benefits. The Department’s report can be found on the Internet at www.va.gov/budget/report.

SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES OMNIBUS VETERANS HEALTH & BENEFITS LEGISLATION

News Release, June 26, 2008

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved comprehensive legislation to improve health care and benefits for returning servicemembers and veterans from previous eras. "The bills the Committee has approved today would make significant and far-ranging improvements to the care and benefits veterans have earned through their service," said Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The omnibus health care bill, S. 2969, the Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2008, includes the following:

- Enhancements of incentives for VA medical professionals, such as pay, benefits, scholarship programs, and work schedules, in order to help the VA recruit and retain top quality clinicians;
- Expansions of numerous authorities, including for the provision of both institutional and non-institutional long-term care, as well as rehabilitative care for OIF/OEF veterans; and
- Pilot programs to assist family caregivers, provide outreach and assistance to returning servicemembers in their communities, and help prevent homelessness among veterans.

The omnibus benefits bill, S. 3023, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2008, includes the following:

- Improved requirements for notices to veterans about their claims for benefits;
- Enhancement of home loan refinancing options and a temporary increase in the maximum loan guaranty amount for veterans; and
- Expansion of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

In addition to the omnibus veterans' benefits and health care bills, the Committee also approved legislation to provide a cost-of-living increase for disability compensation for veterans and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors, as well as a bill to make technical corrections to veterans' educational benefits.

SHADES OF GREEN ARMED FORCES RECREATION CENTER SALUTES VETERANS

Shades of Green, an Armed Forces Recreation Center (AFRC) on Walt Disney World, is offering all military veterans an opportunity to vacation on the resort during the months of January and September as part of a "Salute to our Veterans" program.

"I am really impressed and proud to be eligible to use this vacation resort," said Nancy Dreussi, unit administrative technician for United States Army Reserves, A Company 256th Combat Support Hospital in Blacklick, Ohio. "As a veteran of active duty regular Army and someone who has been deployed overseas to a hostile area as an Army Reservist, this is an awesome 'thank you.' It is great to be able to get away with the family, especially after having been gone from them for such a long time."

Located on Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, the Shades of Green is one of five Armed Forces Recreation Centers in the world. The AFRC's are self-supporting and provide luxury accommodations at a fraction of the cost of similar facilities. Room rates are on a sliding scale based on rank or grade, and reservations are normally restricted to active-duty or retired DoD employees.

Shades of Green sits between the Palm and Magnolia golf courses, two of Disney's PGA-certified courses, and provides soldiers and families all the comforts and benefits of a resort vacation. Situated on 30 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds with cascading waterfalls and lush tropical gardens, the resort boasts 586 guest rooms with 11 family and junior suites, two heated swimming pools, a hot tub, and a children's pool. Guests are provided transportation to all Walt Disney World attractions and early entry into select venues inside the Magic Kingdom. Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios, and Disney's Animal Kingdom Theme Park are just minutes away. Discount tickets are available to all area attractions.

"We owe our Soldiers and veterans the opportunity to enjoy the same quality of life they've pledged to defend," said Rich Gorman, chief operating officer of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command, which runs the resorts. "These AFRC's are one of the many ways we show our Soldiers we're here for them and their families."

While Shades of Green can assist honorably discharged veterans year-round in acquiring discounted accommodations in neighboring resorts and hotels, the "Salute to Our Veterans" program allows veterans to book rooms at Shades of Green Resort for the first time. Space is limited, so early reservations are recommended. For more information or to make room reservations, call Shades of Green at (407) 827-8387 or go online at www.shadesofgreenvets.org.

THE STORY OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

Independence Day is the national holiday of the United States of America commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

At the time of the signing, the United States consisted of 13 colonies under the rule of England's King George III. There was growing unrest in the colonies concerning the taxes that had to be paid to England. This was commonly referred to as "Taxation without Representation," as the colonists did not have any representation in the English Parliament and had no say in what went on. As the unrest grew in the colonies, King George sent extra troops to help control any rebellion. In 1774, the 13 colonies sent delegates to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to form the First Continental Congress. The delegates were unhappy with England, but were not yet ready to declare war.

In April 1775, as the King's troops advanced on Concord, Massachusetts, Paul Revere would sound the alarm "The British are coming, the British are coming" as he rode his horse through the late night streets. The battle of Concord and its "shot heard round the world" would mark the unofficial beginning of the colonies war for Independence.

The following May, the colonies again sent delegates to the Second Continental Congress. For almost a year the congress tried to work out its differences with England, again without formally declaring war. By June 1776 their efforts had become hopeless and a committee was formed to compose a formal declaration of independence. Headed by Thomas Jefferson, the committee included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Philip Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Thomas Jefferson was chosen to write the first draft, which was presented to the congress on June 28th. After various changes, a vote was taken late in the afternoon of July 4th. Of the 13 colonies, nine voted in favor of the Declaration, two - Pennsylvania and South Carolina - voted no, Delaware was undecided, and New York abstained.

To make it official, John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence. It is said that John Hancock signed his name "with a great flourish" so "King George can read that without spectacles!" The following day copies of the Declaration were distributed. The first newspaper to print the Declaration was the Pennsylvania Evening Post on July 6, 1776. On July 8th, the Declaration had its first public reading in Philadelphia's Independence Square. Twice that day the Declaration was read to cheering crowds and pealing church bells. Even the bell in Independence Hall was rung. The "Province Bell" would later be renamed "Liberty Bell" after its inscription - "*Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants Thereof.*"

Although the signing of the Declaration was not completed until August, the 4th of July has been accepted as the official anniversary of United States independence. The first Independence Day celebration took place the following year, July 4, 1777. By the early 1800's, the traditions of parades, picnics, and fireworks were established as the way to celebrate America's birthday. And although fireworks have been banned in most places because of their danger, most towns and cities usually have big firework displays for all to see and enjoy.

THE ORIGIN OF TAPS

During the Civil War in July 1862, when the Army of the Potomac was in camp, Brig. Gen. Daniel Butterfield summoned Pvt. Oliver Wilcox Norton, his brigade bugler, to his tent. Butterfield, who disliked the colorless "extinguish lights" call then in use, whistled a new tune and asked the bugler to sound it for him. After repeated trials, the call was finally arranged to suit Gen. Butterfield and used for the first time that night. Pvt. Norton, who on several occasions, had sounded numerous new calls composed by his commander, recalled his experience of the origin of "Taps" years later:

"One day in July 1862, when the Army of the Potomac was in camp at Harrison's Landing on the James River, Virginia, resting and recruiting from its losses in the seven days of battle before Richmond, Gen. Butterfield summoned the writer to his tent, and whistling some new tune, asked the bugler to sound it for him. This was done, not quite to his satisfaction at first, but after repeated trials, changing the time of some of the notes which were scribbled on the back of an envelope, the call was finally arranged to suit the general.

He then ordered that it should be substituted in his brigade for the regulation "Taps" (extinguish lights) which was printed in the Tactics and used by the whole army. This was done for the first time that night. The next day buglers from nearby brigades came over to the camp of Butterfield's brigade to ask the meaning of this new call. They liked it, and copying the music, returned to their camps, but it was not until some time later, when generals of other commands had heard its melodious notes, that orders were issued, or permission given, to substitute it throughout the Army of the Potomac for the time-honored call which came down from West Point."

In the western armies, the regulation call was in use until the autumn of 1863. At that time, the XI and XII Corps were detached from the Army of the Potomac and sent under command of Gen. Hooker to reinforce the Union Army at Chattanooga, Tennessee. Through its use in these corps, it became known in the western armies and was adopted by them. From that time, it became and remains to this day the official call for "Taps." It is printed in the present Tactics and is used throughout the U.S. Army, the National Guard, and all organizations of veteran soldiers. Gen. Butterfield, in composing this call and directing that it be used for "Taps" in his brigade, could not have foreseen its popularity and the use for another purpose into which it would grow. Today, whenever a man is buried with military honors anywhere in the United States, the ceremony is concluded by firing three volleys of musketry over the grave and sounding with the trumpet or bugle "Put out the lights. Go to sleep..." There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the music of this wonderful call. Its strains are melancholy, yet full of rest and peace. Its echoes linger in the heart long after its tones have ceased to vibrate in the air.

DATES TO REMEMBER

July 2	U.S. Army Air Corps established, 1926
July 4	Independence Day
July 20	Neil Armstrong walks on the moon, 1969
July 27	Korean War Armistice Day, 1953
August 4.....	U.S. Coast Guard established, 1790
August 7.....	Order of the Purple Heart established, 1782
August 14	Japan surrendered, ending WWII, 1945
September 1	Labor Day
September 11	Patriot Day
September 14.....	Star Spangled Banner written by Francis Scott Key, 1814 (<i>see the lyrics below</i>)
September 19	POW/MIA Day
September 17	VFW Ladies Auxiliary organized, 1914
	U.S. Constitution approved, 1787
September 18	U.S. Air Force established, 1947
September 29	Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) established, 1899

CONVENTION SCHEDULES

American Legion

State	July 11-13, 2008, Lewiston, ID
National.....	August 22-28, 2008, Phoenix, AZ

AMVETS

National.....	August 2-9, 2008, Orlando, FL
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Disabled American Veterans

State	April 30-May 3, 2008, Burley, ID
National.....	August 8-12, 2008, Las Vegas, NV

Marine Corps League

National.....	August 10-16, 2008, Orlando, FL
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Military Order of the Purple Heart

National.....	August 11-16, 2008, Las Vegas, NV
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Retired Enlisted Association

National.....	September 7-13, 2008, San Juan, PR
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Veterans of Foreign Wars

National.....	August 16-21, 2008, Orlando, FL
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THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

By Francis Scott Key

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous
fight, O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly
streaming? And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting
in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still
there. O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

And where is that band who so dauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wiped out their foul footstep's pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner! O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a
nation. Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

DAV VAN SCHEDULES TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS

BOISE & SURROUNDING AREA TO BOISE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For more information call Laverne Gillum at the Boise VA Medical Center (208) 422-1000 ext. 7555.

✱ Homedale, Marsing, and Canyon County: Call Laverne Gillum (208) 422-1000 ext. 7555.

Pickup points:

Star.....	Star Merc
Middleton.....	Downtown Shell Station
.....	Shell Station at exit 25 of I-84
Notus.....	Shell Station
Parma.....	M&W Market
Wilder.....	Shell Station
Homedale.....	Shell Station
Caldwell.....	Chevron at 10 th Avenue South & the freeway
.....	Emergency entrance of West Valley Medical Center
.....	Maverick at 10 th Avenue South & Ustick
.....	20248 Hoskins Road
Nampa.....	Karcher Mall near Ross Dress for Less
.....	Albertson's at 7 th Street & 12 th Avenue South
.....	D and B Supply on 12 th Avenue South
Melba/Bowmont.....	Chevron at Greenhurst & Southside
.....	McDonalds at exit 38 of the freeway
Kuna.....	West side of the Winco parking lot

✱ Weiser, Payette, Ontario, Emmett, and surrounding area: Call Grace Field (208) 452-5920.

Pickup points:

Emmett.....	Tom's Cabin Restaurant
.....	Subway near Albertson's
.....	Stinker Station
Fruitland.....	Shell Station at Palisades Corner
.....	Shell Station at the highway
Middleton (Caldwell).....	44 Quick Stop
New Plymouth.....	Lowell's Market at 5 Corners
.....	Hamilton Corners at Highways 52 & 30
Nyssa.....	Anderson Corner
.....	McDonalds at West Park Plaza
Ontario.....	McDonalds at West Park Plaza
.....	McDonalds at K-Mart
.....	Shell Station at the freeway
.....	Shell Station on Idaho
.....	The Elk's
Payette.....	Albertson's
.....	Jerry's Market on 6 th
.....	Lonnie's market
Weiser.....	Sinclair Station at Highway 95
.....	Maverick Station at Highway 95
.....	Chevron Station
.....	Pioneer Market
.....	Ridley's Market

✱ Twin Falls, Jerome, Lincoln, Gooding, and Elmore Counties: Call Cheryl Ringenberg (208) 733-7610.

Pickup points:

Twin Falls.....	Sheriff's Office
Filer.....	Logan's Market
Buhl.....	Oasis Stop-N-Go
Jerome.....	Ridley's Market
Gooding.....	Ridley's Market
Wendell.....	Farmhouse
Bliss.....	Ziggy's
Hammett.....	Penney's Market
Glenns Ferry.....	Shell Station
Mountain Home.....	Foothills Chevron Station

✱ Cassia, Minidoka, and Blaine Counties: Call Dick Dalton (208) 678-3599 or 878-2565.

Pickup points:

Burley.....	Sheriff's Office
.....	Exit 211 Wayside
.....	Exit 208 Hub 66
.....	Greenwood Store

✱ Southeast Oregon - Baker City, Haines, Halfway, Huntington, John Day:

Call Carl Swinyer (541)-894-2546, Robert Warner (541)523-5340 or the VFW Hall (541) 523-4988.

DAV VAN SCHEDULES TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS

LEWISTON & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE AND WALLA WALLA VAMC'S

Wednesdays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Genesee, Moscow, Viola, Potlatch, Tensed, Plummer, and Worley. Arrives Spokane at 9:30 a.m.

Fridays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Uniontown, Colton, Pullman, Colfax, Steptoe, Rosalia, and Spangle, WA. Arrives Spokane at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

Thursdays: Walla Walla VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Clarkston, Pomeroy, Dayton, Waitsburg, and Dixie, WA. Arrives at Walla Walla at 8:30 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center (888) 687-8863 ext. 22529

*****If you are interested in being a volunteer drive, please call Richard Lyon at (208) 882-8580*****

LIBBY & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 6:00 a.m. departure from Libby, MT.

Picks up in Troy MT, Bonner's Ferry, Sandpoint, Priest River, and Newport WA. Arrives at Spokane VA Medical Center at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

COEUR D'ALENE & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Daily: Door to door pick up and return, times variable.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

SALT LAKE CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER

January 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 23, 25, 29, 31

February 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28

March 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27, 31

All appointments for rides should be made 24 hours in advance.

Call Heidi Hopper at the DAV Transportation Office (208) 221-0362 or (800) 613-4012 ext. 2003.



MOBILE CLINIC

JULY ~ 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 <i>On Station</i>	2 <i>On Station</i>	3 <i>On Station</i>	4	5
6	7 <i>On Station</i>	8 Moses Lake	9 Moses Lake	10 Moses Lake	11	12
13	14	15 Kettle Falls	16 Republic	17 Okanogan	18 Okanogan	19
20	21	22 Libby	23 Libby	24 Libby	25 Bonners Ferry	26
27	28 Moscow	29 Osburn	30 Osburn	31 <i>On Station</i>		

AUGUST ~ 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 <i>On Station</i>	5 Moses Lake	6 Moses Lake	7 Moses Lake	8	9
10	11	12 Kettle Falls	13 Republic	14 Okanogan	15 Okanogan	16
17	18	19 Libby	20 Libby	21 Libby	22 Bonners Ferry	23
24	25 Moscow	26 Osburn	27 Osburn	28 <i>On Station</i>	29	30
31						

SEPTEMBER ~ 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Moses Lake	3 Moses Lake	4 Moses Lake	5	6
7	8	9 Kettle Falls	10 Republic	11 Okanogan	12 Okanogan	13
14	15	16 Libby	17 Libby	18 Libby	19 Bonners Ferry	20
21	22 Moscow	23 Osburn	24 Osburn	25 <i>On Station</i>	26	27
28	29 <i>On Station</i>	30 <i>On Station</i>				